

Study Documents Health Insurance Crisis in Rural Utah

A random survey of 500 rural Utah businesses confirms that less than half of rural Utah's firms offer a health insurance option to their employees. The study shows that 52.6% of rural Utah's businesses do not offer health insurance to their employees and that 50.2% also do not offer health insurance to their company officers. The survey was conducted by Information Connections, a Smart Site specializing in surveys located in North Logan.

"These figures are especially alarming when a recent study found that more than half of all bankruptcies are due to costs associated with a medical crisis," says Ed Meyer, director of the Rural Development Program within the newly created Governor's Office of Economic Development. Meyer notes that the lack of insurance puts families and businesses at risk of financial disaster along with their creditors and the rural hospitals extending service to the uninsured.

Rural health insurance is one of the priorities of the Governor's Rural Partnership Board, an advisory board created by the Utah State Legislature to provide input regarding rural economic development and planning matters.

The study also found that 73.2% of those companies paying less than \$10 an hour didn't offer health insurance, supporting national findings that employees in lower paying industries are less likely to receive benefits.

Meyer is pleased that the study indicates 63% of the companies surveyed were willing to provide free information to their employees regarding alternative health insurance options and 85.8% of the companies were willing to contact their legislators if favorable health insurance legislation was proposed.

"Rural companies recognize health insurance is an issue and they want to do whatever they can to help," he states.

Meyer encourages rural Utahns to visit MyHealthCare at <http://health.utah.gov/myhealthcare>. The website was created by the Utah Department of Health to help consumers make informed decisions about their medical care."